

Hon. John McCain
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August 1, 1996

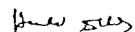
As you mentioned in your letter, the *Journal* article also alluded to a discussion between me and Secretary Babbitt about the timing of the announcement of the Department's decision. I do not believe any such conversation ever took place.

The "active involvement by high-level White House staff" you refer to in your letter simply did not, and does not, occur. We are occasionally contacted by the Democratic National Committee, members of Congress, interested parties and others inquiring as to the status of particular decisions. In these instances, we merely seek to obtain the information necessary to respond to their requests. Where these requests include an effort to secure our assistance in achieving a particular outcome, we decline to become involved, regardless of the source of the request. As a result, I cannot think of any instance during my tenure at the White House where I have personally intervened in Interior Department decisions directly affecting Indian tribes.

Likewise, because contacts between the Democratic National Committee and the White House regarding Interior Department decisions are generally limited to the type described above, I have no personal knowledge of any intervention by Don Fowler or other high-level Democratic National Committee officials in these types of decisions.

As a matter of practice, I can assure you that the departments and agencies of the federal government make these types of decisions independently based upon the respective merits of each case. I can also assure you that I share your belief that the Interior Department's policy decisions on Indian affairs should be made without regard to campaign contributions by the tribes. I hope you find this information helpful and responsive to your concerns.

Sincerely,



Harold Ickes
Assistant to the President and
Deputy Chief of Staff

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